

# Core Principles for the Use of AI Chatbots in Organizational Ombuds Work

From AI (February 2026) with assistance from Mary Rowe

This page includes confidentiality and privacy ideas for discussion with ombuds colleagues, and as relevant, with IT/Legal and leadership colleagues. The information that follows is entirely from AI. As you read, please consider caveats about information from AI which may be inadequate or incorrect or poorly worded here.

## 1. Core principles for ombuds use

- Treat any consumer AI chatbot as if prompts and outputs may be logged, retained, and used for model improvement unless you have configured—and verified—otherwise. (When AI retains and learns from the data and queries you have put into the chatbot, this is referred to as “training.”)
- Treat *enterprise/API deployments* as safer (if they do not use your work for training) but still assume there will be short-term logging. Involve counsel and IT to confirm, in writing, your data-processing requirements.
- Apply IOA Standards: no external recording of confidential conversations, no third-party in the room or listening, no automated recommendations or decision-making about cases. NO discussions or input that could identify visitors, or cases, or the organization itself.

## 2. Green/yellow/red uses (for all AI providers)

### Green – generally acceptable

- Drafting generic outreach, e.g. for research, policy summaries, training materials, and presentations using only public information and non-case-specific and non-identifiable examples.
- Research support on public sources: policies, laws, academic articles, good-practice guidance in conflict resolution and ombuds work.
- Personal skills practice with fully fictitious scenarios that cannot be mapped onto real people or units.

## **Yellow – use only with strict controls**

- Drafting language from aggregate, already-approved statistics (e.g., total issue counts) without narrative detail that could identify a person or small groups.
- Thinking through de-identified pattern descriptions where details are abstracted so that your own organization—or your visitors—could not infer “who or where” is involved.
- Using enterprise/API deployments where IT/legal confirm that there is: no training of the AI, short retention of any data, and strong access controls; still always avoid any identifiable case/visitor/unit content.

## **Red – do not use**

- Any real case information involving dates, titles, small units, or distinctive fact patterns that a knowledgeable insider or the visitor could recognize.
- Any person-identifying names, appearance, job description, emails, phone numbers, dates of service, employee IDs, or case/complaint numbers (unless the latter are randomized, without dates, and identities are not retrievable).
- Time-bounded patterns in small groups (“three women in Unit X in 2025 reported...”).
- Asking AI to triage, score, or recommend outcomes for specific cases.

## **3. Configuration and contracting checklist**

Before ombuds staff use any AI tool for work:

- Confirm in writing whether prompts/outputs are used for AI training; turn off instructions to “use my data to improve” wherever possible.
- Confirm retention period for metadata logs and where they are stored (jurisdiction, subcontractors, backups).
- Prefer enterprise or on-premise deployments with no-training clauses, short retention, and role-based access controls, discussed and agreed upon with IT/Legal.
- Require that AI not be embedded in ombuds intake, scheduling, survey or case-management systems (no AI triage, no auto-summaries of live case notes).

## **4. Simple practice rules for staff**

You can share the following as part of an office AI policy:

- Never type anything into an AI tool that you would not put in an email to the entire organization with the subject line “Public.”
- Use AI only for generic writing, public research, and fictitious training scenarios.
- Do not open AI sidebars, transcription, or “assistants” during any ombuds meeting, call, or online session. Turn off all AI assistance in on-line ombuds discussions.
- When in doubt, treat the situation as red and keep it offline.

**Note: AI may provide responses that are insufficient, inaccurate or offensive.**

**This article draft is part of a Resource Repository designed to support identifying—and helping to quantify—the value of an Organizational Ombuds (OO). This Resource Repository is a work in progress.** It is open to improvements, additions, deletions, critique, revision and random commentary. If any page in the repository is helpful, or needs revision, please let us know. Please contact Mary Rowe or other co-authors, if you can help to improve these pages or have another page to offer.